



Department of Justice

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HOGSETT ANNOUNCES CULMINATION OF THE SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION OF EVANSVILLE - MIAMI - CHICAGO COCAINE TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION

Prosecution ended nationwide criminal organization operating in Evansville

PRESS RELEASE

EVANSVILLE – Joseph H. Hogsett, United States Attorney, today announced the sentencing of the last defendant in a federal cocaine trafficking investigation in United States District Court in Evansville. The twenty year sentence of Francoeur Pierre, the last of 23 persons charged in several related indictments, brings to a close the investigation and prosecution of two groups responsible for the trafficking of cocaine between Miami, Chicago, and Evansville.

“Thanks to the collaborative work of federal agents and law enforcement here in Vanderburgh County, we can announce today the successful dismantlement of this criminal organization,” Hogsett said. “And with these two dozen defendants serving sentences that total more than 229 years, I can say with confidence that these criminals won’t walk these streets again for a long, long time.”

Sentences handed down by the United States District Court Chief Judge Richard L. Young over the course of the prosecution included:

- Jean Sterling, of Miami, Florida, sentenced to 20 years imprisonment,
- Sledge Seide, of Miami / Evansville, sentenced to 16 ½ years imprisonment,
- Francoeur Pierre, of Evansville, sentenced to 20 years imprisonment,
- Julvio Gabriel, of Evansville, sentenced to 10 years imprisonment,
- Julius Wilbourn, of Evansville, sentenced 20 years imprisonment,
- Edgar Gibson, of Evansville, sentenced to 10 years imprisonment,
- Marvin Whitney, of Evansville, sentenced to 10 years imprisonment,
- Bruce Thomas, of Evansville, sentenced to 12 ½ years imprisonment,
- Olivia Alfano, of Evansville, sentenced to 5 years imprisonment,
- Johnny Wilbourn, of Evansville, sentenced to 8 years imprisonment,

- Larnard Dixon, of Evansville, sentenced to 8 years imprisonment,
- Michael Davis, of Evansville, sentenced to 10 years imprisonment,
- Laron Seales, of Evansville, sentenced to 20 years imprisonment,
- Andre King, of Evansville, sentenced to 4 years imprisonment,
- Lamar Duerson, of Evansville, sentenced to 20 years imprisonment,
- Melvin Collier, of Evansville, sentenced to 4 years imprisonment,
- Deon Dickerson, of Evansville, sentenced to 18 years imprisonment,
- Kelly Shidler, of Henderson, Kentucky, sentenced to 11 years imprisonment,
- Amber Powell, of Henderson sentenced to 2 ½ years imprisonment.

Several of the defendants were originally from Miami, Florida, and were associated with the "Zoe Pound" Miami based criminal street gang. "Zoe Pound" is a criminal street gang founded by Haitian immigrants within the United States, with its roots in Miami. During the course of the law enforcement investigation, agents and officers seized large amounts of both cocaine and cash proceeds from members of the groups.

"The U.S. Attorney's office is committed to helping reduce violent crime across Indiana, and dismantling criminal organizations is a key part of our strategy," Hogsett added. "I think the fact that these defendants received more than two centuries in prison sends a powerful message about how seriously we are treating gang activity in Hoosier communities."

On July 7, 2009, law enforcement officers discovered three packages delivered by lead defendant Jean Sterling at the Evansville Greyhound Bus station headed to Miami. One of the packages contained over \$180,000.00 cash intended as payment to Miami drug sources for cocaine previously distributed in Evansville.

Later during the investigation, on November 6, 2009, defendants Sledge Seide and Jessica Jean were arrested near Nashville, Tennessee in possession of approximately 9 kilograms of cocaine. Seide and Jean were in the process of bringing the cocaine shipment, which was arranged by Sterling, from Miami to Evansville for further distribution. Still later in the investigation, on February 1, 2010, defendants Kelly Shidler, Michael Davis, and Amber Powell were discovered in Terre Haute bringing 2 kilograms of cocaine from a source in Chicago to Evansville for distribution.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Brookman, who prosecuted the case for the government, approximately 40 kilograms of cocaine and over \$200,000 cash were seized by law enforcement from various members of the organizations over a several year period.

The federal indictments arose from a cooperative investigation by the Evansville office of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Evansville Vanderburgh County Joint Drug Task Force, Vanderburgh County Prosecutor's Office, and other Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies, including, Indiana State Police, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, U.S. Marshal Service, Kentucky State Police, Henderson County Sheriff's Department, and the Henderson Police Department.

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